



Testimony of Girls for Gender Equity before
The New York City Council
Committee on Education
New York City's Education Budget:
Best Practices to Prevent Sexual Violence in New York City Schools

Good afternoon, Committee Chair Treyger and members of the Committee on Education. My name is Kylynn Grier. I work as the Policy Manager at Girls for Gender Equity (GGE), an organization challenging structural forces that work to obstruct the freedom, full expression, and rights of girls, transgender, and gender non-conforming (TGNC) youth of color. We are also proud members of the Dignity in Schools Campaign, the Sexuality Education Alliance of New York, and Communities United for Police Reform. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

GGE has been in the movement to end gender-based violence and push out in schools for 16 years. As the New York City Council calls on the NYPD to fund a public safety response in light of events in Parkland, Florida through the investment of \$3.5 million in bullet proof vests, we call on New York City Council to reframe an understanding of safety that does not further criminalize young people of color. We strongly support continued investment in additional support staff, such as restorative justice coordinators, guidance counselors and social workers. We also call for the expansion of the number of Title IX Coordinators in New York City. Federal regulations and guidance require *every* school to designate at least one employee who is responsible for coordinating the school's compliance with Title IX. **Currently, New York City has only one designated Title IX coordinator for over 1.1 million students and families**¹

Through a participatory action research project, we worked with over 100 girls and TGNC youth of color throughout New York City to identify barriers to their education and envision the schools that they want, need and deserve. Through this process, we learned that **1 in 3**

¹ Brathwaite, B., & Hudson, K. (2017). *The school girls deserve: Youth driven solutions for creating safe, holistic, and affirming New York City public schools*. New York, NY: Girls for Gender Equity.



participants reported experiencing some form of sexual harassment in school by peers, staff, teachers, and School Resource Officers². We must move urgently towards a vision of safety that does not complacently accept sexual harassment and gender-based violence as a normal part of the school experience.

We are requesting funding to designate **at least one Title IX coordinator to every Field Support Center** responsible for coordination, compliance and carrying out the responsibilities outlined under Title IX. **Title IX coordinators at the Field Support Centers would ensure that all people affected by sex discrimination in schools — students, parents, and employees — are aware of their legal rights working to foster preventative cultures of consent in schools.** This would require an investment of \$150,000 per Title IX coordinator at each of the 7 Field Support Centers in NYC. This totals to \$1,050,000 (one million and fifty thousand), less than a quarter of the \$3.5 million proposed by Council to fund bullet proof vests. As a city we must ensure there is comprehensive in-school support for students who are survivors of sexual violence. We must urgently expand an understanding of safety that holistically supports *all* young people.

² *ibid.*